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Chairman: Ms. Gittens-Joseph ..... (Trinidad and Tobago)

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00-65850 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Agenda item 103: Social development, including questions relating to the world social situation and to youth, ageing, disabled persons and the family (*continued*) (A/55/3, A/55/74, A/55/139-E/2000/93, A/55/167 and A/55/257-S/2000/766; A/C.3/55/L.2; E/2000/9)

Agenda item 104: Follow-up to the international year of older persons (*continued*) (A/55/167 and A/55/257-S/2000/766)

1. **Mr. Adekanye** (Nigeria), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that at the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly held in Geneva in June 2000, to review and assess the progress made in the five years since the World Summit for Social Development, the Member States had concluded that, despite scientific and technical progress, little had been achieved in alleviating the living conditions of the great majority of humankind who still remained desperately poor. The Member States had therefore reaffirmed their commitment to halving poverty by 2015 and to overcoming the obstacles that prevented developing countries from integrating in the global economy and sharing the benefits of technological progress. Governments of developed countries had also agreed to strive to increase official development assistance to 0.7 per cent of gross national product and to find effective solutions to the debt-service burden of developing countries. It had been agreed that attainment of those objectives would require a collective commitment, a holistic approach and the mobilization of additional resources at the national and international levels.

2. Poverty alleviation was at the centre of the national policy agenda in most countries, but efforts had not yielded the desired results, owing in part to fiscal constraints imposed by the international financial institutions and to the advent of globalization, which had often erased the gains achieved. Poverty eradication and the provision of full employment and social integration would require a permanent solution to the problem of the debt burden. Creditor countries must commit themselves to debt remission for developing countries. In addition, more open and accessible markets in developed countries to products from developing countries were essential to the generation of resources and employment.

3. The 1999 International Year of Older Persons had helped to raise awareness of the rapid demographic changes taking place in the world and their grave economic, social, cultural, psychological and spiritual implications, not only for developed countries but also for developing countries, where the majority of older persons resided and where the rate of demographic ageing was increasing rapidly. In the developing countries, too, resources would be needed to meet the health needs of older persons and to retrain them in productive employment. Poverty alleviation strategies must incorporate the needs of older persons in order to make them both agents and beneficiaries of development. The gender dimensions of population ageing would also need to be addressed, as older women were more likely to experience poverty than older men. Since ageing priorities would compete with other policy priorities, there would be a need to raise public awareness to prepare the ground for policy changes. The Group of 77 and China therefore welcomed the decision to convene the Second World Assembly on Ageing in 2002 and to review the International Plan of Action on Ageing.

4. **Mr. Tirado Mejía** (Colombia), speaking on behalf of the Rio Group, said that at the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly, the Member States had renewed their commitment to the agreements reached at the World Summit for Social Development and had decided on new initiatives for their effective implementation. The members of the Rio Group had participated actively in the special session because they believed that the only way to achieve development with equity was to place people at the centre of economic and social policies and to humanize the process of globalization.

5. At the fourteenth Conference of Heads of State and Government of the Rio Group, held in June 2000 in Cartagena, participants had reaffirmed their belief that economic growth should help to reduce the inequalities and high levels of poverty still existing in their societies. To that end, they had pledged to allocate adequate resources to the social sector and to the development of human capital and were looking for ways to increase growth rates and productivity.

6. Nevertheless, in a globalized, interdependent world, eliminating poverty and achieving development

also required high levels of international cooperation, transparent access to markets and clear and fair trade rules. It required the abandonment of protectionist measures and domestic subsidies in the developed world, particularly in the agricultural sector, so that the products of developing countries could compete fairly. While democracy, governance, an end to corruption and the provision of education and healthcare for all were recipes for development in the domestic sphere, access to markets, fair trade rules and reduction of the external debt were essential in the international sphere.

7. In his report on the follow-up to the International Year of Older Persons, the Secretary-General had rightly called attention to the challenges of demographic ageing. Although the Americas had long been noted for having a young population, the 65 and over age group was growing at a much faster rate than the under-15 age group. While many of the reasons for population ageing were positive, demographic projections underlined the need to rethink social policies and to evaluate the impact of population ageing on a sustainable economy

8. Since international cooperation and the commitment of international organizations were essential in order to address the issue of ageing, the Rio Group supported the decision to hold the Second World Assembly on Ageing in Madrid in April 2002 to review and adapt the International Plan of Action on Ageing. Its members would participate actively in the preparations for the assembly.

9. **Ms. Pijnappel** (Netherlands), speaking as a youth representative, said that she and other youth representatives would like to see the United Nations Youth Unit propose a programme that would enable youth representatives from developing countries to attend the General Assembly, including its special sessions. All developed countries should donate generously to such a programme.

10. She wished to focus on the problems of young asylum-seekers. Since they arrived in host countries without any family to support them, young asylum-seekers ought to benefit from a special asylum policy which differed from the one applied to adult refugees. Once asylum had been granted, they should be assigned a legal foster parent, enjoy a smooth transition to suitable education and obtain professional help to overcome traumatic experiences. They should themselves strive for full integration and should receive support from national youth non-governmental organizations. In designing asylum policies, countries should bear in mind that young people were more vulnerable and had different needs. Young people themselves, native as well as migrant, were first-hand experts and should be consulted.

11. One aggravating factor for migrants was racist attitudes on the part of the inhabitants of the host country. Racial hatred was never justifiable, but particularly not among young people, who held the key to a more tolerant society. Young people had the flexibility to increase social cohesion through intercultural learning.

12. Youth representatives were involved in many projects, including the fourth session of the World Youth Forum of the United Nations System, to be held in 2001 in Dakar, Senegal, where young people from developing and developed countries would be able to build partnerships to further implement the Braga Youth Action Plan. Another potential project was the negotiation and adoption of a Youth Rights Charter. Young people faced the paradox that they sought to become integrated into an existing order and yet they were the force that could transform that order and become the wind of change. In conclusion, she drew attention to a draft resolution on "honour crimes" which had been sent to all missions by her delegation, and to a documentary that was to be shown on the subject.

13. **Ms. Yanagawa** (Japan) noted that both the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly and the recent Millennium Summit had stressed the importance of people-centred development. In that connection, her delegation welcomed, in particular, the adoption at the twenty-fourth special session of proposals for further initiatives for social development, including a Political Declaration. At the Millennium Summit, the Prime Minister of Japan had announced that his Government would promote the concept of human security by enhancing the dignity and recognizing the potential of each individual, with particular emphasis on vulnerable social groups.

14. Her delegation welcomed the report of the Secretary-General on the follow-up to the International Year of Older Persons (A/55/167) and the increased awareness of issues relating to older persons, as well as the implementation of the corresponding measures. Nonetheless, further efforts must be made to address

those issues. The value of integrating older persons in society had been highlighted in the communiqué of the summit meeting of the Group of Eight, held in Kyushu-Okinawa in July 2000 (A/55/257-S/2000/766, annex). In that context her Government had introduced a new elderly nursing-care system in which families and society shared responsibility for the growing elderly population in Japan. Her delegation noted with appreciation the offer by the Government of Spain to host the Second World Assembly on Ageing in 2002 and would cooperate in ensuring its success.

15. As stated in the overview of the *2000 Report on the World Social Situation* (E/2000/9, para. 26), disability was something to be overcome and society at large had a role to play in that endeavour. Her delegation encouraged the use of information and telecommunication technology to give persons with disabilities greater access to economic, social, cultural and political life and enable them to participate more actively in society. Japan based its policies for people with disabilities on normalization and rehabilitation and made every effort to share experiences with other Member States in that regard. It contributed to the United Nations Voluntary Fund on Disability, which it hoped would be used efficiently, and looked forward to continued international cooperation to benefit disabled persons.

16. In conclusion, she thanked the Government of Senegal for offering to host the fourth session of the World Youth Forum in 2001 and indicated her delegation's resolve to work closely with non-governmental organizations, which played a significant role in social development.

17. **Mr. Kallehauge** (Denmark) stressed the importance of implementing the United Nations Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities and the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons, which promoted the principles of equality through equal opportunities, participation and inclusion. As stated in Commission on Human Rights resolution 1998/31, a violation of the United Nations Standard Rules was an infringement of the human rights of persons with disabilities. However, the time had perhaps come to remedy some of the gaps and shortcomings of the United Nations Standard Rules, which, as recommended by the Special Rapporteur in his 1999 report, should focus greater attention on women and girls, children and older persons with disabilities, particularly persons with developmental and psychiatric disabilities, and emphasize the right to adequate shelter and the right to development. One of the greatest strides made in recent years had been the recognition that disability and disability-related problems must be addressed by the United Nations human rights monitoring system and given greater attention by the Commission on Human Rights.

18. In conclusion, legislation was urgently needed to guarantee the human rights of disabled persons, the majority of whom currently had no legal protection. In that connection, he welcomed the close linkage established between human rights and human development in the *Human Development Report 2000*.

19. **Mr. Christensen** (Denmark), speaking as a youth delegate for Denmark and a representative of the Danish Youth Council, said that, with more than 1 billion people between the ages of 15 and 24 years in the world, not only the future but also the present belonged to youth. For the sake of continuity and future development, it was vital to recognize the potential of young people and to integrate them in decision-making and in the implementation of development programmes.

20. He urged the United Nations to increase the youth presence in the Secretariat and in development organizations and recommended that all Member States should consider sending youth representatives to the General Assembly, as his own country had been doing for 25 years, in order to send a strong signal that they took youth-related issues seriously. Increased financial resources for and greater coordination of the youth policies of the United Nations system were also essential.

21. Young people and youth organizations could play a vital role in the expansion of global networks and thereby contribute to democratization on an international level. Under its new strategy for development cooperation, his Government viewed children and youth as a resource in development and it would attempt to address youth-related issues in developing countries. Accordingly, it urged the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) either to devote an entire *Human Development Report* to youth or to expand the statistics and documentation on young people aged 15 to 24 years in future reports. That would be a landmark initiative in anticipation of the special session of the General Assembly for follow-up

to the World Summit for Children to be held in 2001. Such reporting should focus on lessons learned and obstacles encountered with regard to youth participation in different programmes and activities with a view to formulating proposals for future youth involvement in development activities.

22. **Ms. McDougall** (Australia), speaking as the youth representative for the Australian delegation, noted that, as the period "beyond" 2000 approached, much remained to be done to implement the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond. Differing socio-economic and cultural contexts notwithstanding, the Programme of Action could serve as a valuable guide to Governments seeking to mainstream a youth perspective into their policies, activities and funding arrangements.

23. Meaningful youth participation at the national, regional and international levels was vital. In addition to their ability to mobilize support, young people brought unique perspectives to problem-solving. In particular, since intergenerational equity was an important element of sustainable development, young people deserved to participate in decision-making about the world they would inherit. Her Government had launched a number of initiatives to enhance the participation of young people in decision-making, including a National Youth Week devoted to raising awareness of youth-related issues and young people's contributions to their communities, and a national youth development strategy designed to improve community and government relations with young people. She urged more Member States to join Australia and other countries in including youth representatives in their official delegations to the General Assembly.

24. Her Government welcomed the initiatives of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) to involve young people in the preparatory phase of the special session of the General Assembly in 2001 for follow-up to the World Summit for Children. Youth participation in the session itself would also be important. Her Government hoped that government policy-makers would give serious attention to the outcomes of the fourth Session of the World Youth Forum to be held in Dakar, Senegal, in 2001. Low-cost mechanisms for youth participation and consultation, including those offered by information and communication technology, could also help to foster a dialogue among the world's young people and between them and their Governments.

25. Effective United Nations support was essential to achieving progress in the above-mentioned areas. In that connection, the United Nations Youth Unit, which was currently a very modest operation, could be expanded to serve as an information focal point and could maintain a database of United Nations youth initiatives and the activities of international youth organizations. The Unit's internship programme could be expanded and consideration could be given to assigning a Junior Professional Officer to the Unit. The Unit could also consider including youth speakers at United Nations conferences and sharing its workload with international youth organizations.

26. High quality education and training, as well as youth involvement in addressing such problems as poverty, violence, substance abuse, poor health, gender discrimination and poor literacy and numeracy, were also crucial for ensuring the full and effective participation of young people in society.

27. **Mr. Valdes** (Chile) said that his delegation had been actively involved in social development issues within the framework of the follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and the recent twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly. It endorsed the statements made in that connection by the representative of Colombia on behalf of the Rio Group and the representative of Nigeria on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

28. The United Nations had been a significant force in building awareness of the problem of population ageing and in guiding Governments in the adoption of policies in that area. In Chile, the percentage of persons aged over 60 had increased steadily in the 1990s and that percentage would continue to grow. By the year 2010, the number of older persons in Chile would equal half that of persons under 15 years of age. To address that situation and using the International Plan of Action on Ageing as a guide, his Government had drawn up a national policy for older persons in 1996 which aimed to transform cultural perceptions of ageing and to ensure that older persons were valued more highly and that their living conditions improved. The policy was based on the fundamental values of equity and intergenerational solidarity and included the principles of self-worth and active ageing; education and prevention for healthy ageing; flexibility in the design

and implementation of policies for older persons; decentralization; and the subsidiarity and regulatory role of the State.

29. In cooperation with civil society and the private sector, the Government was carrying out 19 different kinds of programmes for older persons in the areas of, inter alia, health, social benefits and social integration. Particular attention was being focused on older persons living in poverty and persons over 65 years of age. In 1999, on the occasion of the International Year of Older Persons, the Government had established an interministerial working group to evaluate the national policy for older persons. According to the findings of the working group, older persons currently made up 10.5 per cent of Chile's population. The number of older persons living in poverty had decreased, but other variables in the complex situation of older persons needed to be considered, such as marginalization, abandonment and loss of social standing and self-worth. According to the working group's evaluation, two categories of older persons were experiencing difficulties: older women, particularly women heads of household, and older persons living in rural areas. It would therefore be necessary to draw up a national plan for older persons in order to bring public programmes more closely into line with the national policy. It would also be necessary to improve the management of some existing sectoral programmes, emphasize prevention, particularly in the health area, and incorporate the topic of ageing into primary and secondary school curricula in order to change cultural attitudes to ageing. The Government planned to improve the training of professional teams dealing with older people and to increase specialized training in gerontology. In conclusion, Chile would continue to work nationally on questions relating to ageing and to cooperate internationally particularly at the Second World Assembly on Ageing to be held in Madrid in 2002.

30. **Mr. Calovski** (the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) said that his delegation's views on the items under consideration coincided with those expressed by the representative of France on behalf of the European Union. Implementing the outcome documents of the special sessions of the General Assembly on the follow-up to the Beijing Conference and to the World Summit for Social Development, as well as the United Nations Millennium Declaration would be a major task at the national, regional and global levels, but it could be done if there was the necessary political will and if it was viewed as an integral part of political and development efforts and was addressed in a managed and coordinated way. Within the United Nations, the reports of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization and on the role of the United Nations in the twenty-first century, coupled with the Millennium Declaration, clearly defined the work that needed to be done and the practical steps that must be taken.

31. The social situation in his country continued to be adversely affected both by of developments in the region and by its political and economic transition, which had resulted in increased unemployment. Through various measures and programmes, the Government was endeavouring to help people find new jobs and to ease the social problems confronting them. It hoped that the country's integration in the European Union and the strengthening of the economy would have a positive effect on the social situation. The implementation of regional undertakings, in particular, the Stability Pact for South-Eastern Europe, should also help to improve the social situation in the region.

32. **Mr. Barsky** (Russian Federation) said that the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly had laid down a new global strategy on social development for all and had focused the attention of Governments on the need to draw up socially-oriented economic policies. The task at hand was to implement that strategy. The ability of countries to carry out their obligations would determine their degree of economic prosperity and social justice and the enjoyment of basic human rights and freedoms. International strategic stability in the twenty-first century would depend on the ability of States to maintain peace and security and to use the advantages of globalization and the opportunities of the technological revolution to equalize levels of economic development.

33. The Russian Federation attached particular importance to the consideration of social development questions within the United Nations and supported the intention of the Commission for Social Development to continue the search for ways to implement the agreements reached at the Copenhagen Summit and at the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly. His Government would continue to contribute to the effort to draw up and enchance international standards in the field of social

development. At the national level, measures to combat poverty and raise income levels in real terms were a major priority for it. Particular attention in that regard, was being paid to socially vulnerable groups, for whom special measures were being carried out within the framework of federal programmes, in accordance with the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action.

34. Caring for the disabled was a key area of social assistance. The Government had begun the preparation of a national report on the situation of disabled persons which would analyse the implementation of the United Nations Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities and other basic United Nations documents in that field. A special-purpose federal programme to provide social assistance to disabled persons was being carried out, and plans were being made to hold an international conference in Moscow on equal opportunities for the disabled in the Russian Federation.

35. There was an acute need for an effective policy on young people. Accordingly, work on a bill on the bases for a State youth policy was nearing completion and a federal special-purpose programme for young people covering the period 2001 to 2005 was being drawn up.

36. The Russian Federation supported the approaches to the problem of ageing set forth in the communiqué adopted at the Kyushu-Okinawa summit meeting of the Group of Eight. The ideas of enjoying freedom of choice as to forms of social activity after reaching retirement age, having lifelong access to education, involving older persons in the volunteer movement and promoting respect for the older generation could form the basis for reviewing and updating the International Plan of Action on Ageing. His Government had adopted a number of additional measures to increase the size of pensions, carry out a pension reform, improve medical care for pensioners and develop a network of social-service institutions for older persons, and the work of drawing up a State social policy on older persons for the period up to 2005 had begun.

37. It was important that the outcome documents of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly had taken account of the problems of countries with economies in transition, including the question of providing further international support to those countries in dealing with social problems and of lessening the possible adverse effects on them of globalization. In that regard, he drew attention to his Government's proposal to host, with United Nations assistance, an international conference on social development problems in countries with economies in transition. The purpose of the conference would be to evaluate fulfilment of the international commitments made at the World Summit and the twenty-fourth special session with regard to those countries and to attract additional resources for achieving social goals in the subregion. The conference could be a logical continuation of the global international forum planned for 2001 to mobilize resources for social development and could gear its decisions to meeting urgent needs at the regional and subregional level. In conclusion, he underscored his country's support for strengthening the social component of international cooperation under the leading role of the United Nations, and its intention to participate actively in that effort.

38. **Mr. Melenevsky** (Ukraine) said that his Government was working consistently to translate international social development strategies and policies into national programmes. Establishing a socially-oriented economy and enhancing social policy through the efficient use of existing resources were among the goals included in the presidential initiative on economic and social development strategies for the years 2000-2004. One issue of vital concern was the social rehabilitation of disabled persons. The tragic Chornobyl catastrophe had caused an unprecedented increase in the number of disabled people in Ukraine. Special legislative measures had been taken to ensure equality and non-discrimination for the disabled; the United Nations Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities were an important guide in that regard.

39. Like many other countries, Ukraine was experiencing rapid population ageing. That situation compounded general problems of economic development connected with labour resources and the structure of medical, social and other services, added to the difficulties of providing for the needs of older persons and undermined intergenerational relations. In order to solve those problems, the Government had taken practical steps to promote older people's lifelong development and welfare by launching comprehensive national programmes in support of the International Year of Older Persons which pooled the efforts of government agencies, non-governmental organizations and academic institutions.

40. In practical terms, Ukraine had increased pension benefits and begun pension insurance reforms. The national programme for eradicating poverty among the elderly had become an important instrument for bringing the income level of older persons closer to the national average through increased benefits. Under the national healthcare programme for elderly people, the Government had strengthened existing institutions and established new ones to provide improved medical care to the elderly, as well as maximum social benefits. It had provided free and unrestricted access to medical care for the elderly and continued to enact legislation granting them healthcare privileges. His country welcomed the various initiatives to support the development of a forward-looking strategy on ageing, including the convening of the Second World Assembly on Ageing, and looked forward to working with the other Member States on adapting the International Plan of Action on Ageing to changing conditions.

41. The partnership approach to social development needed to be revitalized. While national action remained paramount, cooperation between the Member States and United Nations agencies could make a significant contribution in that regard. The time had come to enhance international cooperation based on the principles of non-discrimination, open competitiveness, partnership and mutual benefit. The United Nations had a key role to play in establishing effective mechanisms for such cooperation. Lastly, he stressed that United Nations activities in the social and economic spheres would benefit considerably by concentrating on meeting the specific needs of countries with economies in transition, thereby facilitating their integration in the global economy.

42. **Mr. Howell** (International Labour Organization (ILO)) said that there was a strong link between the economic and social dimensions of development, which was amplified by globalization. Moreover, there was growing evidence that high income inequality had a negative impact on economic growth. The traditional dichotomy between economic and social policies had impeded good policy choices. For instance, economic policies could be undermined by their high social costs. The direct economic benefits of social policies also needed to be better understood. Consideration of the social and economic dimensions of policy must therefore be integrated.

43. The ILO concept of decent work provided such an approach, for it spanned a large part of the development agenda: fundamental rights at work, economic and social policies for employment creation, improved socio-economic security and scope for greater participation through free association.

44. ILO believed that once there was freedom of association and freedom from forced labour, child labour and discrimination at work, working people could consolidate social and economic progress. In addition to promoting fundamental labour rights, it sought to address inequality, poverty and the "empowerment deficit" by promoting jobs, social protection and the right to organize and be heard. It believed that youth employment must be built on a solid foundation of intergenerational solidarity ensuring social and economic development for all generations and it was to participate in a high-level policy network on youth employment, which aimed to generate job opportunities through information and communication technologies.

45. ILO recommendation No. 162 concerning older workers addressed three principles: prevention of discrimination in employment, increased social protection and preparation for and access to retirement. Demographic realities were prompting a fundamental reappraisal of the role and importance of the older worker. When workers did retire, inequalities were rife. In many parts of sub-Saharan Africa and in parts of Latin America and Asia, pension coverage was lower than 10 per cent of the labour force. Old age still meant insecurity for the greater part of the global population, and the burden of insecurity in old age fell disproportionately on women. ILO was committed to promoting universal, predictable and guaranteed retirement income reflecting differing needs and conditions in different parts of the world. It would play a full part in the preparatory process for the Second World Assembly on Ageing, to be held in 2002.

46. ILO undertook programmes to help disabled persons overcome the obstacles to their full participation in the labour market. It did so within the framework of the World Programme of Action and ILO Convention No. 159 concerning Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment. It was also in the process of integrating its traditional value-based agenda for promoting workers' rights and social protection with an agenda for sustainable growth and development. It believed that dialogue, negotiation and

consensus-building among Governments, employers, workers and, as appropriate, civil society were crucial to development and social stability. A strong commitment to gender equality cut cross all its objectives. The main social problem was poverty and social exclusion, and the solution was simple: jobs. Decent work was the best route out of poverty and a dignified step towards social cohesion.

The meeting rose at 11.50 a.m.